(b) if so, the reasons and details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Unused Defence Airports

1903. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of unused Defence Aiports in the country;

(b) the names of all such Airports;

(c) whether any alternate use has been planned; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) There are a few defence airfields in the country which have been identified as unused airfields. Out of these, some have been disposed of to the state Governments.

Considering the ever changing operational/strategic requirements, any of these airfields may be required to be used in future. Therefore, in the interest of national security, it would not be desirable to disclose the details in this regard.

India's participation in WPNS

1904. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has participated at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) held in Seoul and as a result has acquired an observer status in the influential 22-Nation forum; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The invitation to India to participate in the Sixth Western Pacific Naval Symposium, held in Seoul from October 11-17, 1998, resulted from interaction between the Indian Navy and the Navies of the Western Pacific Region during recent years including interaction at the level of Chiefs of Naval Staff. The Indian Navy was represented at the Forum India was unanimously granted observer status and India's inclusion in the forum has been welcomed by all the participants. It was accepted that continued multilateral links and cooperation at the professional levels would enhance security, cooperation and mutual understanding.

CSD canteens vis-a-vis small entrepreneurs

1905. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any outside agency has been asked to examine the old systems prevalent in the Canteen Stores Department (CSD);

(b) if so, the name of this agency;

(c) whether it is fact that innumerable hurdles are placed before small entrepreneurs from small towns who wish to do business with CSD;

(d) whether obscure procedures and hurdles are part of any elaborate militry strategy; and

(e) if not, the steps proposed to openly discuss business with small entrepreneurs from outside the metropolitan towns?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Employment